

## Are our brains wired for numbers?

[Cognitive neuroscientist Brian] Butterworth is one of several researchers who believe that the human brain can be thought of as having a “sense” for number, and that we, like our evolutionary ancestors, are neurologically hardwired to perceive all sorts of quantities in our environments, whether that serves for selecting the bush with more fruit on it, recognizing when a few predators on the horizon become too many, or telling from a show of hands when a consensus has been reached.

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Indeed, that most humans, even from a very early age, can quickly and accurately distinguish among different quantities of things is so obvious that it’s frequently taken for granted. This ability, known as numerosity perception, is distinct from counting—the process of keeping a tally while going through a set of objects—and is present in infants long before they learn words or symbols for particular numbers.

It is evident, too, among adults in isolated [human populations](#) that typically don’t use numbers much in their daily lives. Moreover, it’s not human-specific: experiments with monkeys, crows, fish, and even bees indicate that numerosity perception, at least for relatively small quantities, is widely distributed across the animal kingdom.

[\*\*This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.\*\*](#)